

CLAIMS

1 1. A system for transmitting encoded video signals, comprising:
2 a system for partitioning encoded video data into a plurality of streams,
3 a system for determining a priority for each of a plurality of streams of encoded
4 video data; and
5 a system for assigning a variable modulation rate to each stream of encoded video
6 data based on the determined priority.

1 2. The system of claim 1, wherein streams determined as having a relatively high priority
2 are assigned a lower modulation rate than streams determined as having a relatively low
3 priority.

1 3. The system of claim 1, wherein streams determined as having a relatively low priority
2 are assigned a higher modulation rate than streams determined as having a relatively high
3 priority.

1 4. The system of claim 1, further comprising a system that ensures that an average
2 modulation rate substantially conforms to a predetermined target rate for the plurality of
3 streams.

1 5. The system of claim 1, wherein the system for partitioning partitions the encoded
2 video data based on a criteria selected from the group consisting of: distinctions between
3 frame type, distinctions between header and non-header data, distinctions between base
4 layer and enhancement layer streams present in a scalable coded video, and distinctions
5 in video packets containing data corresponding to at least one macroblocks.

1 6. The system of claim 1, wherein the priority of each stream is determined based on an
2 MPEG frame type, and wherein streams containing I frames are determined to have a
3 relatively higher priority than streams containing P frames, and streams containing P
4 frames are determined to have a relatively higher priority than streams containing B
5 frames.

1 7. The system of claim 1, wherein the priority of a stream containing at least one
2 macroblock is determined based on motion and texture information contained in the
3 macroblock.

1 8. The system of claim 1, wherein the system for determining priority assigns a relatively
2 higher priority to MPEG header data than it assigns to non-header MPEG data.

1 9. The system of claim 1, wherein the priority of a stream is based on base and
2 enhancement layers, and wherein a relatively higher priority is assigned to base layers
3 than is assigned to enhancement layers.

1 10. An encoder for encoding and transmitting video data, comprising:
2 a system for selecting a coding bit rate of the encoder;
3 a system for partitioning encoded video data into a plurality of streams;
4 a system for determining a priority for each of the plurality of streams of encoded
5 video data; and
6 a system for assigning one of a plurality of possible modulation rates to each
7 stream of encoded video data based on the determined priority.

1 11. The encoder of claim 10, wherein the plurality of possible modulation rates includes
2 a low modulation rate below the coding bit rate and a high modulation rate above the
3 coding bit rate.

1 12. The encoder of claim 11, wherein streams determined as having a relatively high
2 priority are assigned the low modulation rate.

1 13. The encoder of claim 11, wherein streams determined as having a relatively low
2 priority are assigned the high modulation rate.

1 14. The encoder of claim 11, further comprising a system that ensures that an average
2 modulation rate is maintained at the coding bit rate for the plurality of streams.

1 15. A program product stored on a recordable medium, which when executed, includes a
2 system for transmitting encoded video data, the program product comprising:
3 means for determining a priority for each of a plurality of streams of encoded
4 video data; and
5 means for selecting a modulation rate from a set of modulation rates for each
6 stream of encoded video data based on the determined priority.

1 16. The program product of claim 15, further comprising encoding means that
2 determines a coding bit rate of the plurality of streams, wherein the coding bit rate is
3 selected between an upper and lower bound of the set of modulation rates.

1 17. The program product of claim 16, further comprising means for ensuring that an
2 average modulation rate is maintained at the coding bit rate for the plurality of streams.

1 18. The program product of claim 15, wherein the assigning means assigns a higher
2 modulation rate to lower priority streams and assigns a lower modulation rate to higher
3 priority streams.

1 19. A method of encoding and transmitting video data, comprising the steps of:
2 selecting a coding bit rate between an upper and lower bound of an available set
3 of modulation rates;
4 encoding the video data at the selected coding bit rate;
5 determining a priority for each of a plurality of streams of encoded video data;
6 and
7 assigning one of a plurality of possible modulation rates to each stream of
8 encoded video data based on the determined priority.

1 20. The method of claim 19, comprising the further step of:
2 ensuring that an average transmission rate each of the plurality of streams
3 substantially conforms with the selected coding bit rate.

- 1 21. A decoder for decoding encoded video data made up of different streams, wherein
- 2 the different streams were transmitted using different modulation schemes determined
- 3 based on a priority of each stream, and wherein the decoder includes a system for
- 4 detecting and decoding the different modulation schemes.

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